RIVENDELL INTERSTATE SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD MEETING
District Office – Orford, NH
January 7, 2014 – 6:30 p.m.

Members Present: Marc DeBois (Chair), Cicely Richardson, David Ricker, (Orford); Bruce Lyndes, Mark Avery (Vice Chair), Grover Boutin, (Fairlee); Kathy Hooke, Jennifer Ricker (Vershire); Sarah Rinehimer (West Fairlee); Kathy Blanchard (at-large)

Members Absent: Mike Fanizzi (W. Fairlee)

Administration & Staff Present: Brenda Needham (Superintendent), Keri Gelenian (Head of Schools), Gail Keiling (Head of Elementary Schools/SME Principal), Tammy MacQueen (WES Principal), Jan Cole (SPED Director), Dick Paulson (CFO), Hank Plaisted (Director Info Technology), Mary Rizos (RA Teacher), Daniel Newsted (RA Teacher); Katie Newsted (SME Para)

Others Present: Laurie Gould (Orford), Kayla Gould (RA Student-Orford); Andrea Haehnel (RA Student-Fairlee); Catharine Haehnel (Fairlee); Juliette Bianco (Orford)

I. Call to Order: Meeting called to order at 6:30 p.m.

II. Agenda Revision/Time Allocation: Needham stated that the Athletic Leadership Council was unable to attend and instead Mary Rizos, RA’s Spanish Teacher, would be presenting regarding the Peru Field Trip.

III. General Public Comments (Listen and Defer Action to Future Mtg.): None.

IV. Presentation/Guests

A. Peru Field Trip: M. Rizos distributed information on the Board approved field trip to Peru trip for April, 2014, showing more details and requesting financial support. Needham stated that there were funds still available for a request of this nature and as had been discussed at a previous Board meeting, the Administration is to handle these types of funding requests not the Board. Needham and Gelenian will look at the request and handle it. There was a discussion on various other grants and fundraising options (i.e., the Bryne Foundation, the Mascoma Foundation, VerShare, etc.). Needham stated that if Rizos needed letters of support for any grants, Gelenian and she would be happy to do so.

V. Consent Agenda (Accept):

A. Minutes

1. Board – December 3 & 10, 2013

Action: Motion made to approve the consent agenda, with changes. Approved.

VI. Informational Reports (written):

A. Head of Schools (written): Gelenian gave some updates in terms of his Vermont Principal certification and he has received a letter from VT Agency of Education that he needs to take three courses which he will be taking and has contacted Plymouth State University regarding them. Blanchard asked about Gelenian’s statement in report about Piermont student and school choice. Needham explained that in regards to Vermont school choice, a Vermont student can go to any high school (following the proper application procedure), but NH is not the same. Piermont does not have high school, so if student resides in Piermont, the student can come to Rivendell Academy and Piermont would pay tuition. If student is a Bradford resident, then that is different. Lyndes asked if there had been any more talks with Warren. Gelenian and Needham said they would like to meet with the Warren School Board but would like a RISD Board member with them. Board agreed. Needham and Gelenian will look into this. Hooke asked Gelenian if socio-economic and geographic data had been looked at in
regards to the failing grades. He said he has not found any correlation but could look again. Blanchard asked if the increased requirements for students have had any effect over the year on these failing grades and Gelenian said RA graduation expectations have gone up but he doesn’t see that as having a huge impact which actually had surprised him.

1. **Student Government Report:** None.

B. **Elementary Reports (written):** Keiling and MacQueen said no updates as students had just returned to school. Hooke asked about Science NECAPs. Both MacQueen and Keiling acknowledged that they needed improvement. Lyndes asked if Vermont Agency of Education Secretary Rebecca Holcombe was still coming to visit the Westshire preschools on January 8th. Needham answered in the affirmative.

C. **Superintendent Report:** Richardson asked about the federal excise tax in 2018 in regards to health insurance. Needham explained briefly that in 2018 if an employer has what is considered a “cadillac” health insurance plan, then the employer will get penalized for each person (a 40% penalty). This is not a penalty to the employee. Needham explained that all the VEHI plans by 2018 would be considered “cadillac” plan. However, as this is part of new legislature, it is something to be aware of and NEA, VEHI and school districts are working on and looking at together but there is always the chance of changes before 2018. Hooke asked about tax rates but Brenda said would discuss more during budget below but tax rates will be hit significantly by the state (Vermont).

VII. **Ongoing Business (Deliberation and Possible Action):**

A. **Strategic Plan Process/Retreat (G. Boutin):** Boutin nothing at this time.

B. **Budget 2014-2015:** DeBois stated for the record that the Public Budget Forum tonight at 5:30 p.m. had only two community members in attendance and the next one is scheduled for Tuesday, January 14th, at the Westshire Elementary School. Needham stated that the budget the Board had been given has the overall reduction in it that the Board had requested. She also had distributed an informational budget sheet and said that Paulson would present and explain tax rate. Paulson then explained tax sheet he distributed to the Board and said the mostly likely scenario was the one he based on the NEEP calculation and tax rates would go up. He stated there are three factors influencing the tax rate in VT – the base rate being increased, student base rate being increased and CLAs changed. In order to keep the tax rates about the same as last year, Paulson said that $450,000 would need to be cut from the proposed budget. Paulson also addressed the equalized pupil threshold which RISD is closer to this year because the only deduction we get off the per student cost is the building debt service. Avery pointed out that RISD also had an ADM reduction of 10. Paulson thanked him for pointing that out and said that was correct. Blanchard asked if preschoolers are being counted for ADM yet and Needham said no but that is still being investigated and Vermont has legislation that is being worked on that might be a benefit in regards to this. Avery expressed concern that the District was dangerously close to the threshold and this was not something to go over. Needham said that Paulson and she would keep an eagle eye on that so we don’t meet or exceed that. Avery explained that going over threshold would increase tax rates more due to a penalty. Blanchard said best strategy is to continue to try to get more students, then a discussion ensued on changing the public perception of Rivendell, especially among realtors. Needham also spoke about the District having a lot of homeschoolers right now for a small district. D. Ricker wondered if anything is done to cultivate those families. Needham said that if people call we try to encourage them to attend activities at the schools, etc. DeBois reminded everyone that the proposed budget would need to be at the meeting on January 28th at Westshire and any questions before then should be emailed to Needham or Paulson.

VIII. **New Business (Receive Information and Possible Action):**

A. **Tuition Rate for 2014-2015:** Needham stated that Paulson and she were recommending a tuition rate of $14,600 for grades 7-12 (a $100 increase) and the
elementary tuition rate stay at $11,700. Lyndes reminded Board that because we have to set a tuition rate for the state of Vermont then the District’s hands are tied on this and then NH schools are able to low ball us on this.

**Action:** Motion made to set the 2014-2015 tuition rate at $14,600 for grades 7-12 and elementary at $11,700. **Approved.**

**B. School Calendar for 2014-2015:** Needham stated that VT requires that we approve our School Calendar for 2014-2015 and that the administrators have reviewed proposed draft. She also stated that schools are supposed to align their calendar with their voc-tech school but River Bend has not set their calendar yet and there is concern about what week in February they will schedule their winter recess. She stated that the proposed draft calendar is currently aligned with the Southeast region (VT) which RISD is part of.

**Action:** Motion made to approve the recommended school calendar for 2014-2015, with caveat that the February (winter) recess week may have to change when River Bend finalizes their school calendar. **Approved.**

**C. Correspondence:** None. J. Ricker said that she did attend her first River Bend Advisory Council and they are working on by-laws and she heard about current programs, future programs and changes or termination of certain programs.

**IX. Future Agenda Items (Discussion):** Needham reported that the Leadership Team had discussed at their meeting today Global Language for 6th Grade and had decided that they would like to have time to discuss it more thoroughly and come up with a proposal, so would like to have it not be on the Board agenda for late January. Needham also reported that the January 28th meeting would have on it approval of proposed 2014-15 budget, pre-approval of warrant, and reports.

Future Items: Orford Academy Building Task Force, Crisis Response, Community Outreach, Grants, Global Language for 6th grade, Policies to be Revised (ongoing), Student Presentations, Department Reports, Recruiting Process, Building Use Policy (revisit in May 2014)

**X. Anticipated Executive Session (Discussion), 1 VSA 313 – Action:** Motion made to go into executive session. **Approved.** Board entered executive session at 7:43 p.m.

**A. Negotiations**

Board came out of executive session at 8:05 p.m.

**XI. Adjournment (Action)** –

**Action:** Motion made to adjourn at 8:06 p.m. **Approved.**

Recorded by:

Penny Perryman
Recorder